

Confronting Hegemony

A story of river defense in southern Costa Rica

by

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I. Abstract

I am a Costa Rican artist and water defender doing a Masters in Environmental Studies in York University. One of the big reasons that inspired me to enroll in this program was to get a wider view of the hegemonic powers behind water privatization, and also to learn new tools and methodologies that could improve my current work. This major project focuses on one case study: San Rafael river defense. This particular struggle headed by rural communities in the south of Costa Rica is a successful example of how hegemony can be defeated, at least temporarily.

II. Acknowledgment

First I want to acknowledge water, gently floating in the air, caressing the morning leaves, the profound old waters sleeping in pools, the gray clouds of the tropics, the clear quiet waters singing in the Chirripó, the rain overflowing with life and returning it deep into the ground. I want to acknowledge the water flowing in our bodies, the moving and changing oceans, the snow flakes, the eternal lakes, the rivers, the creeks, the origin, and the memory.

There are also commodified waters, water filling pools and fountains, water taken for the thirst of agribusiness, water decomposing in dams. Water in scarcity, water carrying the waste of industry, water imprisoned in bottles, water as merchandise, water as injustice, water that is gone.

I also want to acknowledge people that are like drops inside the ocean. People breaking walls of injustice with a hammer, with a pan, or with their whole bodies. There are people organizing for the rain to come, for the walls to crack, and for the drops to join... overflowing greed !

III. Foreword

I received a meeting invitation. I had no idea what the meeting was about. I attended to find out that the pristine Chirripó river - originating in a national park - was in danger of being privatized, since a Spanish company was asking to own 90% of the river flow. I had a feeling of emptiness in my stomach realizing how harmful and unfair this could be, not only for that magical river, but for the people. From there we started reading the official documentation, sharing information and trying to figure out how we could start to fight against this project.

Another meeting was organized in Longo Mai, with representatives of different communities affected. This regional gathering was the beginning of the Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Costa Rica (Living Rivers of Costa Rica Movement), where people from different communities united to share strategies, skills and passion to protect our rivers. Ríos Vivos acted as a coordinator of independent defense groups. Along the years we gathered information, we found ways to follow-up a comprehensive strategy in public institutions, we organized and participated in forums, festivals, to protect our rivers. We learned by doing, and we are still learning.

For me it is difficult to be neutral, and not to use the “we” or the “us”, since I am also involved. Actually my water activism is one of the main reasons I embraced the challenge of studying a Masters in Environmental Studies. In a sense I am one of the many organic intellectuals inside the Movement. Even this document is a way to contribute with the creation of counter hegemonic ideology to support the river defense.

The project was structured around two central axes.

Art-based participatory evaluation, as a way of making a collective analysis of the rural river defense, while creating artistic products that belong to the water defense groups: a historical photo collage, water flags and a timeline of the river defense.

Documentary film, collecting the testimonies and perspectives of water defenders to discover how to save a river. This film was a way to document the river defense, and will serve as a powerful educational and motivational tool. [Click to watch online](#)

This Major Project is not only about “Me” or my academic goals; it has been dreamt and built from the perspective of the “Us”. Considering what we as a movement need, how can we make the best use of this effort, how can we gain power, how can we have “products” that are practical and useful.

This research focuses on the rural perspectives of river defense. One of the most emblematic struggles was the defense of the Térraba river led by indigenous communities (Térraba, Boruca, Rey Curré). This fight started decades ago, first against the Boruca hydroelectric project, that latter would change its design and name to Diquis hydroelectric project (the biggest of Central América). The defense of the Térraba river is particular in its ways of organization, same as the legal actions to block the dam centered in the indigenous rights for a proper consultation according to the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention. Diquis project was cancelled recently, giving the Térraba and other communities the chance to fight for their territorial rights. Térraba community supported Movimiento Ríos Vivos since the beginning of our fight. Now we stand in solidarity with Térraba during these difficult and violent times: our dear friend and water defender Jerhy Rivera was murdered while he was fighting to recover his ancestral territory.

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1. Theoretical frameworks

1.1 Water hegemony

Water is life and also is a biological necessity for all living beings, fundamental in all levels of our modern human life, to drink, wash, cook, to shower, or to clean. However, water is not accessible to all; 50% of urban residents in the developing cities of the world have no easy access to clean and affordable water. In the capitalist era, 20% of the world controls the other 80%, consuming their most precious resources. The drinkable water is reduced by the pollution of mining and industry, and also is exploited by agribusiness (Shiva 2002).

Water infrastructure embodies the modernist triumph of humans over nature (Ekers & Loftus 2008). The last 500 years of colonial history are characterized by the primacy of the west, managing relations of nature and society. The new concept of Anthropocene describes the current anthropological period where humans achieved geological force through our modes of production. Hydroelectric dams are considered as modern symbols of progress, these structures are shaping landscapes around the world, with a total of 38,660 dams visible from space (GDW 2020).

Water is considered as a resource that has an economic value, and must be harnessed to create wealth and bring development. This vision of water takes away its sacredness, the relationship between water and societies, and the relation with water and other forms of life like animals, plants, insects and their entire ecosystems. Water runs through every aspect of our daily lives, often overlapping spaces and dimensions; rivers, lakes, underground waters are controlled by governments, corporations, and international institutions such as the World Bank (Barlow, 2009).

From the rural perspective, the rivers are a primary element for life, communities rely on them for their household and recreational purposes, to sustain their agricultural practices, and also to

keep the health of the ecosystems. From this perspective access to land is also fundamental; how can you farm without land? And how can you farm without water? The relationship between water and land is even deeper in indigenous cultures holding a connection with their cosmovisions or particular ways to understand creation, life and the universe. From this perspective water is sacred.

Foucault helps to understand the interpolation of space, and its different connotations (Foucault 1967): For corporations, water and territory hold an economic value, and must be conquered and used to create profit. From some Indigenous and rural perspectives these elements are not assets. Different perspectives can overlap in the same place leading to conflicts, where the actor with more power conquers. A corporate vision of water tends to prevail, and it is visible through the expansion of hydroelectric dams around the world. The benefits of commodified waters are concentrated in the global north and in cities, while the rural communities and peasantry are oppressed and pay for the ecological and social impacts of dams.

The effects of climate change are increasing the social tensions to have access to water (Swyngedouw, 2004. P.18). These tensions are also present in the rural communities of Costa Rica, where there is an increasing demand of water for human consumption, but also an increasing demand of water for extensive agribusiness, tourism, and to produce hydroelectricity. Water conflicts are led by communities, workers and environmental groups, transcending the environmental aspects of the struggle, confronting the development model, capitalism and the role of the state (Alpizar et al 2019).

Gramsci's concept of hegemony is an idea of power held together by forms of consent through common sense, cultural morality and other social structures (Forgats & Gramsci 2000). The cultural hegemony of capitalist and neoliberal ideas, created a global set of "intellectual" networks that support the political, social and material conditions for the construction of large "development" projects. The ideology is produced in academic and economic institutions, and cultural institutions like mainstream media. The governments, corporations, and regulatory

bodies, not only gain consent by force, but also by a set of belief systems that shape our social relations with water, and place the neoliberal energy projects as “development” and therefore something good for society.

The distribution of water has been transformed by neoliberal hegemony, a delicate situation made worse by the increased conflict and competition in exploited territories and places where water scarcity is natural. The hegemonic control of water is clearly visible through examining river flows.

According to Foucault, oppression and normalization are two forms of power (Foucault 1980). His critique places academia as a manifestation of normalization and truth, referring to it as the “Scientific Regime”. The privatization of water for the so-called “renewable,” “ecological” or “green” energy is a historical process related to capitalist modes of production, where the oppressor builds a regime of ideology, and if this isn't enough it can also respond with violence. Between the years 2000 and 2017, over 50 environmentalists were murdered in Latin América, fighting against hydroelectric projects across the continent, and the list keeps growing (Álvarez 2016). Latin América is one the most dangerous places on earth for environmental activists. The murder of environmental activist is a manifestation of oppressive power.

Oppression is normalized in all aspects of human relationships. The popular expression “The world always has poor people, and it always will” benefits the dominant, as they need poverty to exist, in order to access cheap labour and also to exploit territories and natural resources. In the case of hydroelectric expansion taking place in rural communities in Costa Rica, the so-called “developers” benefit from communities' economic crisis and the lack of governmental public investment, promising to fulfill needs of infrastructure, and also to bring economic development in exchange for rivers. *“This promise was made several times in northern Costa Rica, where rivers were privatized and drained to produce electricity, but this promise was never met. The north is filled with corpses of rivers”* said Otto Méndez (El Chapuzón 2020). Being able to recognize the environmental effects of hydroelectric expansion in the northern communities,

helped me to recognize the oppression in my region and actively engage in the river defense. In Costa Rica a 90% of the river flow can be legally concessioned to hydroelectric dams and agribusiness leaving only 10% of water for the rest of the ecosystems, insufficient to sustain life. The manipulation of water on such a scale is a way of oppression, not only for the human beings related to the drained rivers, but to the rivers themselves.

The current thoughts about oppression have an anthropocentric perspective of the problem, forgetting that the dominant structures not only exploit men and women, but commodify living elements like water, land, trees, animals and seeds. The relationship between humans and nature must be healed; for this to happen it is necessary to understand the ideology used by western cultures to justify their domination over nature. These ideas can be traced back to religious beliefs, the same beliefs that justify the oppression of women. (Ruether 1993).

The world is experiencing water scarcity, and climate change will affect precipitation, affecting the availability of water for agriculture and human consumption (Fieldman 2012). The conflicts related to water are increasing; in Latin América alone, 130 million people don't have access to clean water (Barlow 2009). With this scenario it is hard to understand that countries are still open to sacrifice their remaining rivers for the sake of energy despite the negative impacts of dams on water systems. Decision makers are not taking into account that it is possible to produce electricity with other technologies that don't compromise the health of rivers and the access to water.

Hydroelectric expansion is promoted -paradoxically- as a solution for climate change. The argument is that countries can reduce their fossil fuel expense by developing hydroelectric plants. The industrialized developed countries are able to manage their emissions purchasing carbon credits, used to develop *sustainable* infrastructure in the global south.

With this transaction the developed countries compensate for the greenhouse emissions of their growing industries and cities. This ideology does not take into account the effects of large scale manipulation of water, and its disruptive ecological, cultural and socio economic implications.

The ecological and social impacts of dams are minimized when argued with the ideology and discourse of sustainable development.

Hydroelectric expansion leaves a legacy of usurped territories and cultural destruction. The construction of water reservoirs has displaced between 40 to 80 million people around the world (Conca 2006). In the case of Costa Rica the current legislation allows the monopolization of 90% of the river flows to produce electricity, leaving a trace of death and scarcity, affecting the socio-cultural and also the economic relationships between communities and rivers, leaving environmental devastation.

Power dynamics within the economic system and geopolitics create the conditions for environmental struggles (Ekers & Loftus 2008). These struggles are a response from oppressed communities to confront the capitalist machinery of dispossession. The dominant discourse that supports hydroelectric expansion finds a counter hegemonic set of ideas produced by social and environmental movements, exposing the ecological and social impacts of dams (McCully 2004).

1.2 Counter Hegemony

Knowledge creation and the formation of awakened subjects are manifestations of counter hegemonic power. Freire and Gramsci both saw the way to challenge power structures is through awake and empowered women and men.

The power asymmetries of hegemony are addressed in popular education practice, a pedagogy based on the ideas of Paulo Freire. Encouraging critical thinking and the learning through praxis (a mix between critical reflection and actions) where the participants co-create alternative forms of knowledge (Barndt 2011). According to Freire, education is a political tool for liberation, that encourages individuals to liberate themselves through a strategy of authentic pedagogy of critical consciousness and counter hegemonic actions. Subjects earn power while they analyse their context, recognizing the oppression within their lives, jumping into liberating acts (Freire 2018).

To confront power it is necessary to recognize and give value to organic ways of knowing like traditional social relationships, the cultural connection with the river, songs, stories, and ancestral forms of knowledge that include cosmovisions (worldview). There must be a dialogue between popular and scientific knowledge (Kane 2001), taking what is useful, and constructing a new set of ideas and beliefs. Social movements must have the capacity to produce what Gramsci describes as organic intellectuals (Forgats & Gramsci 2000), empowered and liberated subjects who are able to dance between the hegemonic ideology (having the language to confront it) and the organic manifestations of knowledge. An organic intellectual is the personification of praxis. Not necessarily an academic, an organic intellectual can be a community organizer, a facilitator, or an active protagonist of the struggle (Beck & Purcell 2013). The organic intellectual is the individual who has freed her/himself from an oppressive mindset, and actively participates in the liberation of others.

The machinery that shapes Ideology, also shapes the cultural aspects of life. Power structures have not always had success at taming the creative spirits that are often independent and close to the heart of social struggles. Art can act in the service of domination, or serve as a liberation tool (Freire 2001). Art can be a way of knowing and looking at the world and reality through different lenses. This interaction is praxis. Art helps us to connect with multiple layers of emotions, experiences, memories and thoughts (Finley 2012).

Art practice is a way to collectively create knowledge, not only for the minds but for the hearts. The process can help people to understand the roots of the problem, and work towards a change (Barndt 2011) Art-making is an awareness tool; it can start an internal dialogue. When this process is done collectively, it becomes a popular source of power, giving voice to the quiet, allowing a deep and sincere conversation, raising the spirit of the struggling artist and community. The artistic process gives the opportunity to challenge social structures and reality, to respond to the pain, to add to the conversation, to help us see what is in front of us, to engage us in critical reflection (Weber 2020). Art also helps us to jump into action, toward a transformation of oppression. It is important to embrace the potential, power and the beauty of

different art forms: music, poems, murals, signs, performance, theatre, painting, illustration, film and photography. These practices are present in social, environmental, civil rights and feminist movements confronting injustice and challenging power throughout history and in the present times.

1.3 Context of San Rafael river defense

Extractive industries make geological changes on earth, as in the case of water infrastructures. The construction of hydro dams is still expanding in all continents, regardless of the environmental challenges that humanity is facing like climate change, water scarcity and pollution. In Central América the construction of dams and infrastructure for electricity distribution is still growing. Energy production has been privatized since the 1990s, after the signing of international trade agreements, leaving the planning of the electric market in the hands of private investors. The hunger for profit led the public and private investors to build 187 dams, with another 34 currently under construction and an additional 204 new dams in the process of obtaining approval in the region (GeoComunes 2019). The increase of hydroelectric dams creates tensions between “developers” and indigenous and rural communities, who are aware of the devastating impacts of dams, and are fighting to protect their territories, their natural resources and their access to water.

In 2019 Costa Rica inspired the world with a record of six months of their infrastructure powered only with renewable energy sources. Global media coverage placed Costa Rica as an example for first world countries, producing the majority of electricity from Hydroelectric Dams (Canelo 2019). The hydroelectric expansion in Costa Rica is promoted by sustainable development ideology and the national legislation. Building dams requires significant amounts of capital; the “developing” companies invest only a fraction, and look for financial institutions to cover the remaining costs of the projects. These financiers can be multilateral financial institutions, national development banks or private banks. (GeoComunes 2019) In Costa Rica most projects

are financed by an international configuration of capital justified by sustainable development ideologies, supposedly aiming to fight against climate change.

TABLE 1. CAPITAL BEHIND HYDROELECTRIC EXPANSION IN COSTA RICA

Ideology supporting hydroelectric expansion is marked in italics

World Bank: This group funds projects for developing countries with the goal of reducing poverty and *promoting sustainable development* (World Bank). With a total of 8 hydroelectric projects financed in Costa Rica. This institution was critiqued for the poor and violent implementation of hydroelectric projects like Chixoy Dam in Guatemala, with over 400 Mayan people assassinated (Conca 2012)

BCID or Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) is an international financial institution for development (BCID 2020). One of the main areas they support is *sustainable energy* and the interconnection of the region with the System of Electrical Interconnection of the Central American countries (SIEPAC)

BID (Inter-American Development Bank) is a multilateral financial institution that makes loans to countries, supporting *development projects*, with a growing portfolio to address *Climate change, environmental sustainability and renewable energies*. This institution financed a total of 6 hydroelectric projects in Costa Rica.

CDM. Clean Development Mechanism financed 11 hydroelectric projects in Costa Rica. This mechanism helps industrialized countries meet their *emission reduction targets* established in the Kyoto Protocol (United Nations. Developed countries finance *ecological* projects in developing countries to earn certified emission reduction credits.

OFID. Fund for International Development is a multilateral development financial institution to promote cooperation between members of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) and other developed countries. This fund has the purpose to cooperate with developing countries in their fight against poverty. (OPEC 2020)

JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency is working with the American Development Bank (ADB) to provide credit to co-finance *renewable energy* projects.

The electric market in Costa Rica is controlled by the ICE (National Institute of Electricity). The law 7200 and the law 7508 promulgated in 1995 allowed the private sector to produce 30% of the electricity market. This law not only opened the electricity market, but also forced the ICE to buy unnecessary electricity produced by private producers. Currently ICE generates 2 694,8 MW monthly and the maximum confirmed demand in July 2018 was 1.674 MW (Angulo 2019).

Clearly the country is over producing energy, looking forward to export to the regional market through the System of Electrical Interconnection of the Central American countries (SIEPAC).

The law established a safe profit opportunity for private energy investors, since they had a buyer for their production and they could have access to loans from international financial institutions that looked forward to investing in *renewable energy projects*. This business opportunity was also taken by José María Figueres Olsen, the President who promoted the 7508 law.

The international *sustainable development* discourse and the national legislation favored the expansion of private and public hydroelectric dams around the country. In the year 2012 the south pacific of Costa Rica (Pérez Zeledón, Buenos Aires, and Coto Brus) had a group of 20 new hydro projects (Gutiérrez 2019); all of them were concentrated in the Térraba river basin. The San Rafael Hydroelectric Project was one of them.

This project was to be constructed in the San Rafael River, located in San Pedro of Pérez Zeledón. The dam was looking to obtain the concession of the 95% of the river flow, to produce 7250 KWh. This dam was promoted by the H.Solís construction company, the biggest concessionary for governmental public infrastructure. Between the years 2014-2021 H.Solís had contracts of over \$416 million dollars (Soto 2018). This company was looking to diversify its portfolio with a number of hydroelectric projects around the country. San Rafael hydro was financed with public resources, receiving a loan from the National Bank of Costa Rica.

The defense of the San Rafael river was undertaken mostly by habitants of rural communities of southern Costa Rica, organized in the Comisión Defensora del Río San Rafael (San Rafael river defense group) and Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Costa Rica (Living Rivers of Costa Rica); with a network of national and international solidarity groups.

At the beginning of the struggle most of the river defenders did not consider themselves as “ecologists”; they organized to defend a river, their territory and their access to water for human consumption and for their agricultural practices. A deeper environmental consciousness developed during the years of organizing.

In terms of Ríos Vivos, the short term goal was to stop the hydroelectric projects in southern Costa Rica, including the San Rafael Project, and in the long term the objective was to build a river defense movement, that could still be active in the future, not only to defend the rivers from dams, but defend the rivers against the over-exploitation for agribusiness, pollution, and privatization.

TABLE 2 Long term objective, and short term goals of the river defense.

	Objective	Indicators
Long Term	To build the movement to defend rivers in the future	Deepening the activists' knowledge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis • Skills • Sense of power • Relationships Networks

	Goals	Indicators
Short Term	Defend the rivers, defeating Hydroelectric Projects.	Cancellation of the hydroelectric projects.

2. Arts-based participatory evaluation on San Rafael river defense

2.1 Methodology

Since the beginning of the MES program I was clear about my desire to bring something back to my comrades, and share some of the things I had the opportunity to learn while I was studying abroad. While I was in Toronto I heard the good news about the temporary cancellation of the San Rafael hydroelectric project, being the 18th victory of water defenders in the south of Costa Rica achieved in the last 20 years. The Terraba river basin flowing free to the ocean is one exceptional case, and I wanted to discover how the exception can be the rule.

I took some time to question what was the best way to get close and learn, but also to allow others to learn. Should I approach the work with a participatory mural? How can I design these moments of creation, but also to encourage a horizontal analysis of reality? What is the best approach to research in this particular case? I knew it would have to be artistic, participatory, collaborative, flexible, human... and with the guidance of my supervisor Deborah Barndt who suggested that this inquiry could be channeled through something called Participatory Evaluation.

An evaluation process made sense, as it is useful to take a look inside the group, recover history, create new knowledge, and also energize the group relations and reinforce its work (Kranias 2016). Making a pause, looking at ourselves, remembering together, could be a good starting point, in which I could learn, and also the water defense groups could benefit from, and revitalize their energy and their organizational skills, in case the San Rafael hydroelectric project reappears.

As a visual artist and environmental activist, often facilitating collaborative art work, I am guided to do my research in combination with art. Actually, Art-based research allows the systematic use of the artistic process, and the creative process is a way to understand bigger processes and experiences (McNiff 2010). Art plays an important role, but is also a way to create knowledge, in the form of shared experiences, emotions that could be transferred into knowledge, or into forms of data. Data is not my main focus, since I am more interested in the human component, that is multidimensional and rich.

Popular Education or education for critical consciousness (Arnold, Barndt, & Burke 1986) was widely used in Latin América, working with the poor in the rural and urban areas, at first for literacy, but also addressing injustice and oppression, and empowering the participants not only to see the oppressive situations, but to liberate themselves. It was surprising that I learned about Popular Education while I was studying for my Masters in Environmental Studies, regardless if I had years instinctively working with the principles of Popular Education. It is beautiful to see how transformative methodologies are able to cross pollinate through solidarity networks and Popular Education was also useful to respond to inequality issues also present in the North American societies.

Participatory Evaluation (PE) is based on the principles of Popular Education, starting in the 1970s, especially in the developing world like Latin América, in contexts of exploitation, inequality, and social problems, and influenced by the ideas of Freire, Gramsci, Marx (Cousins 1998). PE was a good umbrella to guide the work with San Rafael water defenders, combined with the use of artistic practice. Participatory evaluation implies collaboration between facilitators and groups (Cousins 1998). Collaboration is a key to being able to have a horizontal conversation, and build new knowledge, not only for me as a researcher, but a knowledge that is useful for the participants and can transform into tools of liberation.

The horizontality of PE manifested during my work with river defenders, for example, to be able to construct collectively the evaluative questions, that would guide the evaluation process; to

have check-ins during the workshops to see how are we feeling, and if we wish to adjust or change something, to be aware if we are feeling comfortable with the process. As facilitator I could plan ahead and prepare myself, but the path was traced and walked collectively. The use of art forms such as drawing, collage, theatre were not only a creative process, but a way of inquiry, raising questions, opening a dialogue. (Later I will detail in the different methods applied during the workshops).

This dialogic inquiry process can address diverse communities, and adapt to the reality of the group. (Chouinard 2013) The evaluator is not only looking at the subject, but the learning is horizontal and collective. The group also can enrich itself with the process, creating new knowledge and awareness that can be useful. For me it was very important that this research was not only focused on my learning, but could be also a learning experience for the participants from the water defense groups. My role as an evaluator-actor was to create the right environment and circumstances to foster participation, to create a safe space in which we could express our feelings, memories, concerns and observations, reducing fear or limitations. The use of art forms helped in this sense, to reduce the pressure, to distract the mind and the fears, and to provide other means of communication. To see, to talk, to hear and be aware of oppression. The next step would be toward transformative actions.

In this sense there is one variation of PE called Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE) that embraces knowledge creation, encouraging people to create their own knowledge, actively participating and questioning in a transformative and empowered way (Cousins 1998). So T-PE would be a more specific umbrella, however there is not a perfect recipe for all situations. It is important to have the sensitivity and intuition to apply different tools or aspects that can serve to work on a specific group, dynamics, place, time of history. The “subject” is multidimensional, and is not a passive thing; the subject is alive, rebellious, unpredictable. The subject is my fellow river defender. This freedom can be a challenge in terms of facilitating a process and trying to meet a schedule, but this characteristic of the group also made the process more interesting and enriching, with surprises along the way.

2.2 Strengths and constraints

Participatory Evaluation provides a framework, with a set of ethics and methods that helped to develop my work. The participatory process created conditions for self empowerment. Not only focusing on results but in the process to challenge power relations and liberate future actions (Cousins 1998). In the case of the San Rafael River this is a key, since the group needed to reinforce their work and also look into future actions.

Participatory Evaluation encourages participation, equity, collaboration, and creativity (Kranias 2016). This is harmonious with my vision, and helped to frame the discussions. It provided a safe space for participants, and even helped to address the differences within this diverse group. It also made the process enjoyable and fun. Participatory Evaluation has the potential for empowering groups and generating useful knowledge for the participants, not only for the facilitator.

One of the challenges was time. I had to carry out this creative exploration in only three sessions (18 hours in total). I am aware of the big effort made by participants to be there in this process. Another reason to limit the work to 3 sessions was the budget; I had limited resources and had to cover the expenses of food, transportation, and materials for every session.

2.3 Methods

Evaluative Questions: How to start, without getting lost? We started with simple Evaluative Questions (Kranias 2016) to guide us to understand how a small rural community can confront hegemony, liberating the San Rafael River:

What were we confronting?

What just happened?

How did we defend the San Rafael river?

These questions guided the design of the Participatory Evaluation.

Learning Loom: (Appendix C 73) This is a framework for designing and implementing educational activities. It was created from an adaptation of a framework named “Cuadro síntesis” created by ALFORJA network and used in Popular Education in Latin America (Arnold, Barndt, & Burke 1986).

The learning loom helps us to plan and design activities, but also to take into account who is responsible and what are the materials needed. I found this very practical, as it helped me to have a more realistic view of the workshops. It also helped me to delegate some of the activities, and in this way to promote participation. However, the plans are likely to change and move in another direction, and that's fine.

Portrait of the monster: Arts have the power of opening conversations and discussions, a large format paper and a marker are enough mediums to uncover the identity of the common enemy. A representation of the monster was drawn, the participants wrote words that described the problem they were confronting. The result was a profound analysis of the struggle, not only related to the river defense, but of bigger issues related to inequality, exploitation, class struggle and hegemony to mention a few. This method opens a door to dialogue, and encourages horizontal participation.

Timeline: Inspired by the Annotated Timeline described in the Participatory Education Toolbox (Kranias 2017), this tool was appropriate for this particular case, to document and build a collective history of San Rafael River defense. We used a 7-meter long paper, sticky notes, and markers. Every meter represented a year and was divided into 12 pieces representing months. The participants formed groups to discuss and write every event they remembered or found, with

the assistance of books, agendas and social media. Later on the participants placed the events in the timeline, on the respective or approximate date (Appendix D 78).

Spider web analysis: This visual evaluation tool was also found in the Participatory Education Toolbox (Kranias 2017). In this case we identified strategies and measured from 1-5 how the group felt about the effectiveness of each. This exercise was very helpful; the participatory setting captured attention and allowed a fluid dialogue as well as critiques, in a friendly environment with a wide participation.

Photo Collage (Appendix A 67): The use of images can help a group look at the situation with new eyes, and can enrich memories with new conversations (Weber 2020). The collaborative compilation of pictures helped us to document past actions, and then the artistic manipulation of these images helped to raise memories and also the emotions related to them. The photo collage is also a storytelling and educational tool.

2.4 Participants

The Participatory Evaluation was carried out during three workshops in San Rafael, where the San Rafael river is running free. The group included active members of the Comisión Defensora del Río San Rafael (San Rafael River defense group) and Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Costa Rica (Living Rivers of Costa Rica Movement). This brought together different perspectives on river defense, not only from the local organization, but from the network of solidarity around the river.

It is important to acknowledge the diversity of the group, and the existing power relations among participants based on gender, education, and age. These differences must be addressed in order to be able to co-create knowledge in a participatory process (Hill 2013). I also had to take into account my power as facilitator, and how I can use this power to guide the process.

I thank the participants for trusting in this process, for their open hearts and minds, their honesty and their valuable insights. I also want to make note of their willingness to invest up to 18 hours of their time, sacrificing their productive activities and personal commitments.



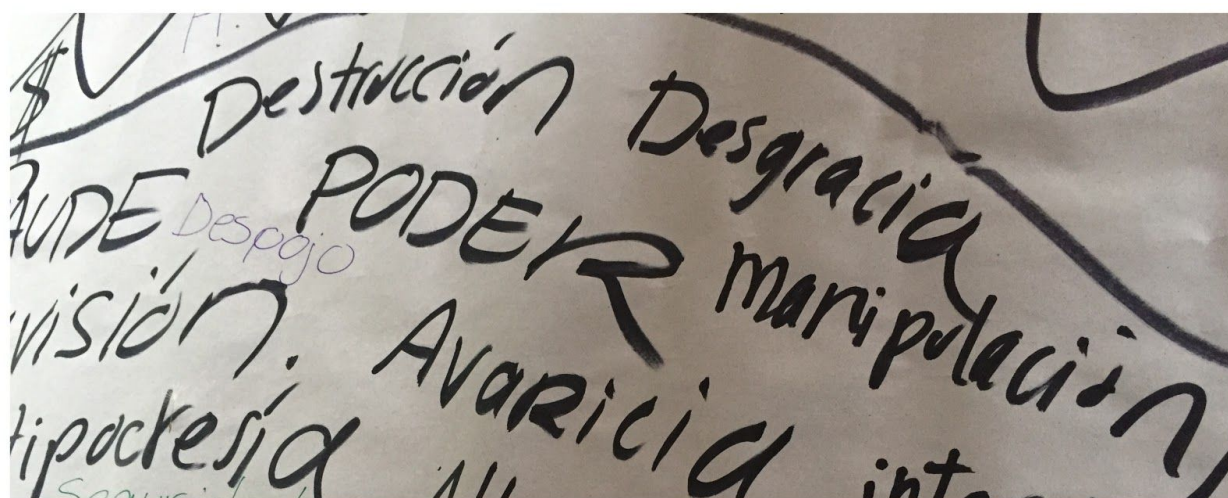
The participants' names are as follows, from left to right.

First row: Maritza Vargas Abarca, Oscar Arias, Verónica Abarca Camacho, Rafael Abarca Mora. Second row: Luis Angel Valverde Picado, María Rosa Abarca Porras, Gerardo Valverde,

Emilce Camacho Calderón. Third row: Gabriela Mora Blanco, Carlos Marín, Lillian Vargas Bonilla, Jorge Morales Piedra. Fourth row: Pablo Romero Barboza, Isabel Solís Blanco, Jury Spendlingwimmer, Eliecer Corrales Mora. Fifth row: Deyanira Abarca Mora, Madeline Kiser, Mireya Vargas Abarca, Oscar Beita.

2.5 Collective analysis

2.5.1 What was our struggle?



At first we had to name the problem which we had confronted. It was helpful to make a graphic representation of it. So I asked: “What is it?” And Oscar said “It’s a monster!” “And what shape should it have?” “An elephant!” said Emilce. “No, it is more like a poison snake,” said Eliecer. So I drew a 4-meter long monster with sharp teeth. Each participant described the monster, by writing inside the drawing. Their responses are summarized in the categories below.

The monster (H.Solís)

Power: *This company has control over others, because of their wealth or lobbying.*

Corruption: *This monster is able to manipulate people who hold positions of power, it also has laws in their favor. (7200 and 7508 laws)*

Empire: *They already are a large and important construction company, they want to expand into hydro electricity.*

Extortion: *They want to privatize the river, using force and threats.*

Plague: *H.Solis is everywhere, causing worry and difficulty.*

Hypocrisy: *They said one thing, but what they mean is the opposite of what they are saying.*

Fraud: *They pretend to build a dam by deceiving people, what they offered is a lie.*

Manipulation: *They control people to their own advantage, often taking advantage of our economic crisis as farmers.*

Haughtiness: *They think they are better than us, and they are proud.*

Lie: *They are telling us things that are not true. For example: That the hydroelectric dam is going to bring tourism, and help the economies of the communities.*

Fake: *They are trying to sell us something that isn't real.*

Ignorance: *They don't know what is a river. Or they don't care.*

Injustice: *They work according to the laws. What they do is legal but unfair.*

Their motives:

Greed: *They need to have more and more, they can't stop looking for more money.*

Artificiality: *They are not real or sincere in their intentions.*

Usurpation: *They want to take control of the river, even if it doesn't belong to them.*

Accumulation: *They just need more and more, they are looking to build at least 10 dams.*

Hegemony: *They are strong and want to control us, our river and territory.*

Appropriation: *They pretend to take the river for their own profit.*

Consumerism: *They want to buy property, and have more things. We would rather have the river.*

Ambition: *They do whatever they need to achieve what they want, without considering the well being of others or the environment.*

Money: *We see a river, they see money! They pretend to earn \$10,000 each day.*

Impacts on communities and the environment:

Division: *This problem divided families and communities.*

Conflict: *This situation caused disagreement between people.*

Thread: *We feel that something unpleasant or violent will happen.*

Destruction: *What is left if they take 90% of the river flow? A dead river!*

Misfortune: *It is bad luck that they are pursuing the hydroelectric project.*

Bully: *They frightened us for years to do something that we don't want.*

Privatization: *The dam would take 90% of the river flow.*

Poverty: *We experience challenging times, and this hydroelectric dam would increase the economic problems we face.*

Undevelopment: *This “development” vision was going to make us go backwards; we could lose access to water.*

Death: *A river without water can't sustain life.*

Hate: *We feel a strong dislike for this hydroelectric project.*

Horror: *We are constantly frightening and shocked.*

During the Participatory Evaluation workshops, the word FEAR was very common, especially when we took the moment to name the problem. The participants agreed that their life changed when H.Solis company started to promote the dam in the year 2012. The hydroelectric project affected the relationship between neighbors, since some of them were expecting the promises of economic progress proclaimed by the company that offered jobs, even to 80-year-old men. According to the participants, some leaders of the community were hired to promote the project, organizing secret meetings with members of Associations and organizations, offering them economic benefits for the community if the project was built. The number of jobs was not clear, because the company would hire people on the construction phase of the project, but after that, the number of employees would drop down to only a few. The economic aid to the community was not a formal commitment, it was only words. The documentation presented by the company to institutions made clear that the intention of the company was to get the concession of 95% of the river flow, diverting the water to an artificial reservoir to produce electricity.

The problem was the danger of losing a river, as well as communities' access to drinkable water, water they need for their agricultural practices and the river as a space for recreation and enjoyment. The problem was also about injustice and oppression; this was expressed as fear and a continuous state of alarm, since H.Solís created their plans for profit far away from their main offices, in a rural community of Costa Rica.

We stared at the monster in silence. Isabel concluded: “It is difficult to confront any of these aspects, even if it is only one. And we had to fight with all of them! It is not a small thing”.

Organizing and standing up to defend a river takes a lot of courage, thinking of the proportions of the incoming creature, and its tentacles connecting with figures of power. And challenging its Ideology that pretends that hydropower is clean, green or renewable energy, that people need this electricity, that hydro is a good alternative to climate change.

2.5.2 Collective historical timeline



Let's gather our memories, to remember what happened in our struggle to defend the river. Let's separate into smaller groups, and write down the actions and events that we remember. All groups actively collected events from social media posts, their phones, whatsapp groups, notebooks, and their memories. Then all the participants placed the events on a 7-meter long sheet, one meter representing one year of river defense starting in the year 2012 till 2019.

It was very surprising to see a total of 178 actions regarding San Rafael river defense; this effort made possible that these actions were not forgotten. There was no previous documentation of past events. Some dates were estimated, some exact. Some actions are not reflected on the timeline, for example in the case of political advocacy that consisted mostly in private meetings, phone calls, letters. And many events were already forgotten.

Looking at the timeline, and with his hands on his head Eliecer said: *"Wow, I didn't know we had done so much!"* The surprise was general, it was impressive to see so many efforts together, so many pieces of the puzzle. *"That is a lot of energy"* said Jorge, *"that's a lot of love for the river"* I added. There is one action missing, let's write on a sticky note, with today's date: *"Documentation of San Rafael River defense"* said Isabel.

The creation process of the timeline is a collective pedagogical tool that promotes a learning process while creating new knowledge, where the participants document their own story, opening the door to further analysis (Kranias 2017). The timeline helped the participants to acknowledge their own work, and the constant small and big actions related to river defense. The information on the timeline was systematized in a sheet (Appendix D 78).

We took a moment to highlight the most transformative and the most empowering moments during these years. Most of the key actions helped to measure the strength of the river defense through a broad participation, but also most of them were confrontative. It did not matter if the

group was big or small, but that they were brave enough to take the company representatives and their machinery out of their territory.

The key actions highlighted took different forms. Rafael Abarca was attacked by one of the dam promoters, who threw a rock at his head. That moment of tension and resentment helped to bring the group together and also to increase solidarity with the water defenders.

TABLE 3	
MOST EMPOWERING MOMENTS IN SAN RAFAEL RIVER DEFENSE	
First meeting of communities affected by Hydroelectric projects.Longo Mai	Mar 1st 2013
First meeting to share information with the neighbors. 100 people assistance	July 2nd 2015
Walking protest in San Rafael communities, over 400 people attended	Set 21st 2015
Over 600 people assisted to protect the river at the Aresep hearing	Feb 2nd 2016
Over 50 people traveled to San José to have a private hearing with SETENA	Sept 7th 2016
Agression to Rafael Abarca. He was hurt with a rock in his head	Nov 18th 2016
Protests and blockage of the panamerican road at La Unión bridge	Oct 12th 2016
Confrontation with H.Solís employes while they did explorations on the river	2017
Creative meetings to paint signs to protect the river	june 6th 2017
Community Forum "Bad water governance" In response to a governmental forum	Sept 9th 2018
Confrontation to block the entrance of machinery paid by H.Solís	Oct 19th 2017
Environmental and artistic Festival San Rafael	May 6th 2018
Reforestation on San Rafael River	June 5th 2018
Hydroelectric project Diquis was cancelled.	Nov, 2nd 2018
Protest in San José, Ríos Vivos and Turrialba communities against H.Solís	April 25th 2019
Minister of Environment rejected the the San Rafael hydroelectric project	July 15, 2019
Celebration and visit of the Minister of Environment	Aug 10th 2019

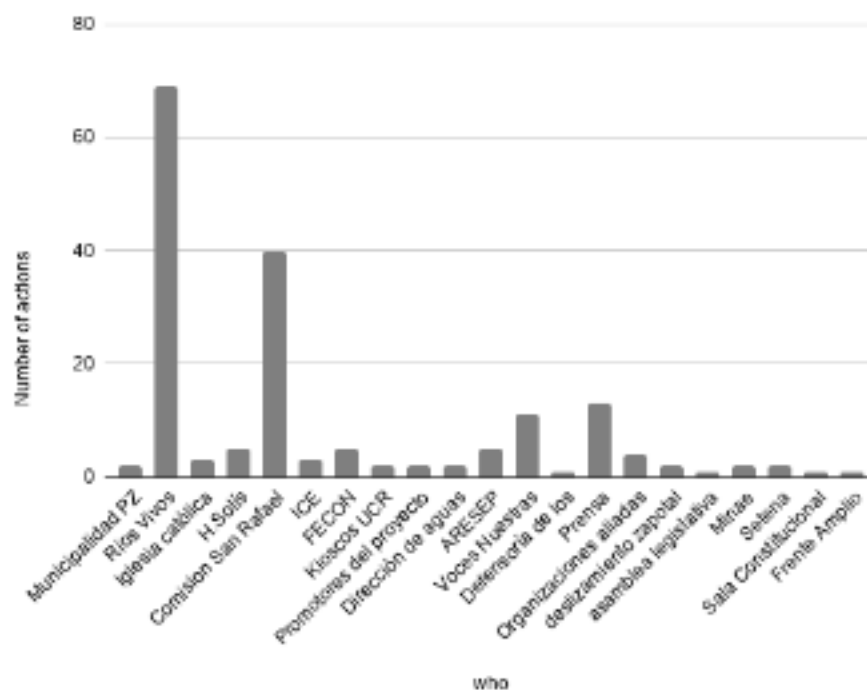
And of course, there were moments related to art and celebration, such as a two-day Art Festival in San Rafael with participation of national and local musicians, painters, storytellers,

comedians, dancers, and acrobats volunteering their work in solidarity with the San Rafael River defense. The key moments were easy to remember, and seem to be important. But the key moments alone are not everything, every action has a value. It doesn't matter how “small” it can be, like collecting signatures, or attending a meeting, those small actions are what the bones are in a body, they are the foundation.

Documenting what just happened gave us a moment to step aside, and take a look at the weaving made of big and small actions by individuals, groups, communities and organizations. And to recognize the work of each, and how that energy and love can save a river. We celebrated being a part of that effort!

It is difficult to track who is responsible for each action, since most of them are collective efforts. But the table below identifies the key groups involved and the number of actions led by each.

Figure 1
Events by actors



The actor with the most registered events is Movimiento Ríos Vivos. This defense group has different groups or commissions that respond to the administrative, legal, bureaucratic actions, organize informative meetings, write press releases and administer social media. The Comisión Defensora del Río San Rafael is in second place according to the number of registered actions, however this might be incorrect. Since many actions like meetings with neighbors, committees, Associations, political advocacy, signature recollection, coordination were not documented and forgotten in the official history.

The participants were able to track 178 events relevant to the river defense, and it is important to make note that the water defense groups did not have any funding to do their work. All the work was voluntary, sustained by a clear conviction and love for the river with personal and economic sacrifice. In words of Emilce:

“I think money is important, but it is not everything. We had to fight regardless of it. If we sat and waited to have money, I don't think we would have been able to save the river.”

2.5.3 Photo Collage



While I was in Toronto, I was thinking that it would be very nice to work on a mural, and the workshops were planned to include mural production. One of the principles of Popular Education and that I also learned from Deborah Barndt was to flow with the current, be flexible and read the moment. Plans can change, and often they must change for the best of the process. That's what happened with the plan for a mural.

The historical timeline was initially more like an introductory activity to acknowledge what just happened. It was also to build a historical record of the water defense that could be of use for other water defense groups. But it turned out to be the central point of the Participatory Evaluation, because it gave us the opportunity to deepen our analysis as well as to share it with images.

As Weber observes, “Images can be used to communicate more holistically, incorporating multiple layers and evoking stories or questions.” (Weber, 2020, p.6) We collected historical pictures of the river defense, found on cell phones, emails, computers, data cards, Facebook, Whatsapp. A total of 450 pictures were found and printed. Now we had the history in our hands.

First the images were classified by year, provoking discussion since the images activated memories and stories. And then we were ready to start a composition, gluing the images on seven different panel boards, each representing a year of struggle. The information was similar to the timeline, but this visual representation generated a more emotional reaction for participants, who found themselves in the pictures, and then started to tell details of each event, connecting dots between different actions and moments. I knew that the photo collage was going to be a good storytelling tool, since everyone was speaking at once.

The idea of the photo collage emerged in the workshops as a way to have a physical record of the history that could be shared with the community, in future meetings or forums. It was important

In this section we will focus on the counter hegemonic strategies used to save the San Rafael river, despite the obvious power asymmetries of the conflict, where the hegemonic power is represented by H.Solís company. We used a Spider web diagram (Kranias 2017), a visual technique that helps to collect perspectives and evaluate the group performance of each strategy. The group assigned a rating, 5 stars being the maximum rating and 1 star the minimum. The description of each of the strategies will be summarized below.



Institutional follow-up: The institutional follow-up is still going on after the cancelation of the dam. Different procedures and legal actions were presented in public institutions such as National Institute of Electricity (ICE), National Environmental Technical Secretariat (SETENA), Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE), Regulating Authority of Public Services (ARESEP), Ombudsman Office (Defensoría de los Habitantes), National Risk Prevention and Emergency Response Commission (CNE), Municipality of Pérez Zeledón, Water and Sanitation Institute (AYA), National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC).

This follow-up was done without financial resources, but through voluntary work and individual economic investment. This is the case of one member of Ríos Vivos who traveled to San José once a month to visit different institutions, reviewing each file and taking photocopies of the updates, so the group could be updated and respond accordingly. The work was carried out organically, responding to the course of the project's process. Many documents were written collectively in meetings or using electronic platforms by a team of self made specialists. Many of the legal actions were sustained by signatures. The collection of signatures was very important on a local basis since water defenders communicated with their communities and shared information and updates of the river defense.

The institutional follow-up was a collective effort of Ríos Vivos de Costa Rica and the Comisión Defensora del Río San Rafael with the support of organizations like FECON, Voces Nuestras, Asociación de Cooperativas de Longo Mai, academics, defense groups, the legal department of the Frente Amplio Party, just to mention a few actors involved.

However, (though we insist that the institutional follow up was necessary), the institutions dismissed most of the documentation presented by the water defenders, arguing the lack of technical criteria, even if the legal actions had strong arguments and were based on current legislation. The truth is that communities and environmental defense groups like Ríos Vivos don't have the economic means to hire professionals like sociologists, hydrologists, biologists, and geologists to build "acceptable" arguments. What we have here is a power asymmetry (Zeitoun 2005) promoted by the institutions that ignore other kinds of knowledge.

Despite outstanding institutional follow-up the San Rafael hydroelectric project obtained the necessary approvals and permits and was ultimately blocked at the very last hurdle: the National Interest declaration of the Minister of Environment and the President. The Ministry of Environment determined, based on a cost-benefit assessment, that the dam did not serve the country's best interests.

★★★★★ In this rating the group recognized the enormous efforts of follow up on the project process, and they recognized how much had been learned during the years of lobbying.



Alliances: Movimiento Ríos Vivos is made up of alliances between communities, committees, and associations confronting hydroelectric expansion. The Comisión Defensora del Río San Rafael is also woven into these alliances since it is made up of representatives of different communities bordering the river. San Rafael river defense gained the support of other communities and groups, Associations, organizations such as FECON (Federation of Conservation), Voces Nuestras association, students from the National University (UNA) and the University of Costa Rica (UCR) as well as journalists and academics. Likewise, there was support from international universities and Mesoamerican media.

San Rafael water defenders also supported other communities in similar struggles, such as the defense of the Guacimal River, the movement against pineapple expansion, the Finca Changena peasant fight for farming land, Turrialba river defense, and Indigenous communities on the defense of their ancestral territory.

Over the years, river defense groups experienced tensions in the midst of political campaigns, and with discussions such as the so-called “Gender Ideology” that threatened the work within the groups; these internal conflicts taught about the importance of tolerance, and the necessary practice of avoiding ideological, political and religious differences, while focusing on common objectives.

In the words of Carlos: *“It is necessary to have allies, to unite the common elements of the fight. There are allies that do not have all our same approaches or orientations, but at some point we agree to fight for a river. So we have to look for all the possible allies who want to protect a river and take advantage of that energy. We have to forget what divides us because then we could not work together.”*

★★★★★ The alliance work was remarkable, and the group felt accompanied by a network of solidarity. Despite the obstacles, the group has managed to cope with the differences and continue with the work. The challenge is to keep these alliances alive through time.



Meetings: The meetings recorded on the timeline totaled 41, and there were probably many more undocumented. The meetings had different purposes: to coordinate activities and to share the details of procedures and events within the local committees. There were also other meetings with other committees and organizations as well as visits to communities. The meeting spaces allow us to humanize the struggle and to know the faces of those who walk with us. They are also a space to share information and strategies and to find strength and motivation. Most meetings were held in houses, with a cup of coffee, and home-made bread.

★★★★★ The group agreed that the meetings have been important, and a lot of energy has been put into being present. They acknowledge that within the Defense Commission of the San Rafael River there was a decrease in local meetings, since the energy of the group was focused in the institutional follow up and political advocacy, and this pause weakened the group. For this reason, the participants identified that it is important to continue being vigilant, even if the project is momentarily canceled; precisely to keep stoking the fire of the fight.



Information. In the initial phase, water defenders worked very hard to obtain information on the project, then this information was reviewed and arguments opposing the project were articulated. They drew on previous experience of the opposition to other projects in the southern part of the country, which also had the support of members of the Ríos Vivos Movement and people from the community. Information activities were organized in different communities of the district to share information about the San Rafael hydroelectric project, and to correct the misleading information that had been shared by the company H. Solís. These meetings were organized with groups of neighbors, and the information was shared by members of Movimiento Ríos Vivos. The information was essential so that more people joined the fight and the work of local organizations was strengthened. In later years the information was generated outward, sharing the context of the struggle, and the effects of the hydroelectric projects. The learning process is continuous, as the information is shared within the Ríos Vivos Movement and the San Rafael River Defense Commission and within the community. In recent years, information meetings are less common, and the use of media such as radio, written articles, and social networks (Facebook and Whatsapp) is more frequent.

★★★★ It is recognized that the information empowered the communities, but although a great effort was made, there were some people who could not be reached, especially those outside the San Rafael district.



Training: The solidarity networks included the support of the Voces Nuestras Association, which helped strengthen communication and advocacy skills. These workshops also strengthened the personal capacities of the participants. For example, some workshops addressed gender inequality, and brought to the surface gender inequality issues within the communities, where religion continues to influence the values and coexistence between people. As a result of the workshops the participation of women within the Commission was strengthened, breaking with patriarchal structures inside the river defense group. According to Nelsi "The workshops taught me to speak, to know that my word also has value."

★★★ The self critique was about participation, some people -mostly men- dropped out because of discussions about feminism.



Communication: This was an important part of the fight, since it went from being news stories told by others, to being content generated by the river defense groups. The members of the Comisión Defensora del río San Rafael, the Ríos Vivos Movement and allies knew how to take advantage of the spaces in the media to share information about the defense of the San Rafael River and against the hydroelectric projects. It was supported by allied journalists who made their local radio and television programs available. Also with the support

of organizations that positioned the issues in alternative spaces for national broadcasting. The fight was publicized through press articles, interviews, radio programs, and television. The Ríos Vivos Movement also generated information through press releases, videos and the radio program El Chapuzón that was broadcasted on different radio programs in the country, in Mesoamerica and through social media networks.

Communication is a way to produce, and subsequently to create ideology; it is a way to build power.

★★★★ River defenders were not able to get coverage by commercial media, because a fee has to be paid. To get minutes on national TV, it was necessary to make dramatic actions, like the blockage of the Panamerican highway.



Arts of resistance

Art is a part of the river defense in southern Costa Rica; it can take many forms such as signs, drawings, cartoons, paintings, photography, film, illustration, music, performance, theatre, storytelling, and dance. Many artists are actively part of the defense groups and others have collaborated with the river defense with their creative endeavours.

Art helps to strengthen the group's identity, to create a visual imaginary for river defense. Art helps to raise the spirit and the energy of the struggle, even in challenging times. Art is an empowering and liberating tool.

One remarkable action was the collective painting of signs. The purpose was to express their rejection to H. Solís company, and also to create love messages to the river. The materials were mostly donations, recycled tarps, and even second-rate sheets purchased at "American Apparel" stores. A total of 150 messages were painted, and installed in houses, trees, posts, across San Pedro and La Unión. One of the episodes of violence during the fight occurred during the placement of one of the signs; in the disturbance Rafael Abarca was hit on the head by a stone, and was hospitalized.

★★★★ The Participatory Evaluation also involved the use of art. The participants recognized the potential of the art practice as a way to attract new people, and also to keep the group organized and committed.



Self Funding: Both the Defense Commission of the San Rafael River and the Ríos Vivos Movement are “de facto” environmental movements, which do not have a legal status to back them up, and can’t access funds for projects. Both groups identify themselves as defense groups, so they refuse to behave like NGOs that depend on stakeholders. Self funding helped the groups to have more independence, prioritizing their objectives.

The river defense was sustained thanks to the mystique, love, conviction and volunteer work of many, but also with personal economic collaborations to purchase prints, transportation, food, paint, canvas, and sound equipment. However, funding the river defense is a challenge, taking into account the growing economic crisis in the rural communities, after the implementation of

neoliberalism and free trade agreements. In this regard Isabel clarifies: "We are not poor, but we have economic limitations."

As Luis said, "If a company had to pay all the work done by us over all this year, they wouldn't have enough money to afford it. We were so many working on the weekends, day and night if we had to... H.Solís only was able to pay a handful of employees working for a salary, their employees lacked passion."

★★★ The participants recognized that they made sacrifices at the level of their family economies in order to defend the river. Although the fight was sustained, their self critique is that they should have been able to raise more funds, through activities such as bingos, danceable karaokes, and food sales to support the river defense instead of using their own resources.



Political advocacy: The Defense Commission of the San Rafael River and the Ríos Vivos Movement had some contact with candidates for political positions, but in most cases these efforts did not bear fruit once these people were elected. The only political party that openly gave support was Frente Amplio, which supported the defense of the southern rivers from the offices of representatives Edgardo Araya, Patricia Mora, and José María Vilalta. Advocacy was also carried out through the pressure exerted by the defense groups, positioning the issues through appearance in the press or through demonstrations. Likewise, Ríos Vivos participated in decision-making spaces such as the National Energy Forums. It must be recognized that there were also efforts at the individual level, where members of the Commission

and Ríos Vivos found spaces to position the defense of the San Rafael River with people in public office.

Political advocacy, together with other strategies could have influenced the outcome of the San Rafael hydroelectric project that did not obtain the National Interest Declaration, rejected by the Minister of Environment.

★★★★ The group values all the efforts made over time in this matter, however many times during the years some efforts did not succeed especially with the Municipality of Pérez Zeledón, that favored the interests of H. Solís.



Confrontation: These moments served to demonstrate the community muscle behind the defense of the San Rafael River, with participation in meetings, marches, walks. There have also been times when the group demonstrated its fierce character: for example, it blocked the passage of machinery contracted by H. Solís and even faced the police or the closure of the Inter-American highway at the La Unión bridge in San Pedro. The confrontational nature of the defense groups of the San Rafael River gives a clear signal to those who make decisions about the imminent escalation of the conflict in the event that permits are granted for the construction of the dam.

★★★★★ The group gave the maximum score to this strategy, because for them this characteristic is a guarantee that in case the company manages to obtain the permits, they will not allow the construction of the dam.

The water defenders managed three main scenarios:

1. The idea of San Rafael water defense groups was to focus on the institutional pressure, and to block the project with legal actions.
2. If regardless of these efforts the company obtained the approvals to build the dam, then a last legal action could take place building a case in the Administrative Litigation Division of the Supreme Court of Justice. The principal challenge in this scenario would be to collect money to pay for a lawyer who could defend this action, and the process could take years to be resolved.
3. If the company obtained the permits and intended to start the construction process, then the groups would have to make use of confrontation and put their bodies on the front line. The conflict to protect the river had the potential to escalate, and cause a bloodshed.

The final decision came from the Minister of Environment in favor of the river, rejecting the National Interest declaration of the San Rafael hydroelectric project. It was a big surprise for all, considering the political power and influence this company has. The minister based his response merely on a cost-benefit analysis. But the efforts of water defenders on political advocacy, communication, information and confrontation and also conjuncture might have influenced this decision.

2.5.5 Dreaming of a future



After remembering, reflecting on and analyzing our steps and actions over the years, it came time to breathe and dream of the future. A table was ready with pieces of fabric, paint and markers. The participants expressed their visions and dreams through the creation of “river flags”. Some of the flags were abstract, others had messages, and symbols, like trees, rivers, hearts, drops of water. Isabel said: *“This is one of the first times that we can think about what it is that we want.”*

In a circle we shared our vision of the future, that can be summarized as follows: The participants expressed their wish to continue with the conservation of the rivers, to be active with positive actions such as reforestation and environmental education. They want future generations to enjoy free rivers and have access to water. They want to live with dignity, and create a real sustainable development in their communities, that would have to be ecological and with social justice.

They group recognized that it is necessary to change the current legislation that allows the exploitation of rivers, and that authorizes the concession of up to 90% of the flow to develop highly harmful and unnecessary hydroelectric plants.

A word cloud was generated with the transcripts of the discussion:



The future is uncertain. Even though the San Rafael hydroelectric project was temporarily canceled, the same uncertainty is lived by other communities. A total of 20 projects have been dismissed by the *developers* or cancelled in the south of Costa Rica. There is always the danger for the projects to re-appear like it happened with the Hidrosur and the Diquís projects that came after their cancellation, with a redesign and a brand new name.

This struggle awakened peoples' awareness about the rivers, not as something to be used, but as a living element that is a part of their lives. Some water defenders like Eliecer recognized that he had not been respectful with the river in the past, because he didn't know. So he improved his way of farming, obtaining a Blue Flag certification for implementing environmental practices.

The river had been taken for granted, but the danger of losing it re-shaped peoples' relationship with nature. Now when they think of the future, they include this new set of values and a free river is essential in their view.

The participants look forward to continuing to be organized and strong to be able to keep defending the rivers, and helping other communities with similar issues. Not only to protect the river against hydroelectric dams, but to confront other problems such as privatization, pollution, and an increased expansion of the pineapple agribusiness.

Some short term actions were identified during the workshops:

1. To use the meeting to present results of the participatory evaluation as an opportunity to gather the community, to share with them the results of the workshops and the findings of the process. (They changed it from a small meeting to a community party!)
2. To screen the documentary in different communities together with other creative outcomes of the participatory research. These meetings will help to keep the groups alive and to share the latest news.

3. Documentary film



Available online with english subtitles:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6l2fbTfUrF4&t=1059s>

3.1 Reflections on the making and use of the documentary film

The documentary has the purpose of representing different voices of the river defense, not only from San Ran Rafael, but for the rivers that were also liberated in the south of Costa Rica. Members of different communities described the problem they were facing, and how this public or private enterprises promoted the hydroelectric project on their communities. The film brings a wider perspective of the problematic, that is not insulated but is a part of a global trend of destruction.

In the second part the participants share common strategies for river defense. These small actions validate other ways of knowing and other forms of collective power that confronted the hegemonic hydroelectric expansion.

The film is a counter hegemonic tool, and also counter public, since the subjects have the possibility to express and participate in the construction of the message, and this message challenges the dominant ideology (Warner 2010). This piece emerged from the margins of society, giving a voice to those who don't have access to the public sphere dominated by mainstream media (Foust 2017).

As a filmmaker I have the power to guide the narrative and also the perspective, so power dynamics should be considered and addressed in the video production. Questions like if the film comes from the outside or from the inside of the situation? The piece is made by whom and for whom? (Keeling 2011) How can we work horizontally, and avoid colonial practices? I also continuously asked for feedback from participants, asking them what they wanted in the film and how they would use this piece.

This short film is a pedagogical tool for the Ríos Vivos de Costa Rica movement. It will be presented in different communities that are a part of the movement, and with other groups that are fighting similar battles against dams, agribusiness, mining and other forms of extractivism. The strategies shared by the participants are not a simple recipe to follow, but give some clues about other forms of organization, empowerment, and alternative ways of knowledge. This short film is also valuable to inform people outside of these communities, and outside of the county about the impacts of hydroelectric expansion and river defense in southern Costa Rica.

3.2 Participants

The participants are water defenders from Ríos Vivos, giving their perspective of the struggle and their ways of organizing and sharing the same problem in their communities: Santa Elena, Quizarrá, Rivas, San Rafael, San Jerónimo, Longo Mai. Carlos Vainer is from Brazil. I interviewed him during the MAR (Movement of communities affected by dams) meetings in Panamá.



3.3 Water imagery



The documentary is also a way to give a voice to water, by placing it as one of the main protagonists of this story. Water is a starting and ending point in the narrative, as it is essential for ecosystems and communities, sustaining life.

Many of the images were captured at different locations of the San Rafael River. I asked the experts what were the most beautiful views of the river, and sometimes they guided me. The solidarity of comrades allowed me to visit the upper part of the river in Aguacatales and San Jerónimo. During my research I visited many rivers, looking for inspiration; it was also a constant reminder of the purpose of this work: to protect water. During these visits I took the opportunity to film in the Poza la Arepa in General Viejo, Río Chirripó Pacífico, Río Convento, Río Sonador, Río Peñas Blancas, Río Peñas Blanquitas, Río Gariché in Panama. Every time I have been surprised by the beauty of the rivers, the tranquility and peace that they transmit to me, a busy and sometimes preoccupied student.

One of the most powerful memories to portray the solidarity behind the filming was at the moment of taking the underwater footage. I spent the night at Hernán and Lillian's ranch on the banks of the San Rafael River, to be there to film in the early morning. I called my hosts to let them know I was joining them for breakfast after taking the underwater shoots. Hernán arrived immediately, and said to me:

"You should never enter the river alone, you never know if you will faint, or slip and hit your head... Here I am, I will wait to take care of you ... no matter how long it will take"

So he sat for one hour while I filmed.

3.4 Distribution of the film:

Gatherings: In response to the conversations that took place during the Participatory Evaluation workshops with water defenders, and their need to continue active and gathering people, we came up with the idea of making presentations of this short film, together with the *Collective Timeline* and the *Photo Collage*, to open a space for conversation. *Cinema Forums* can take place in communities, organizations, schools, universities and will be organized by the Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Costa Rica.

Online: We will also use platforms such as Youtube, and social media, with subtitles in Spanish and English for accessibility.

3.5 Returning the video to Rios Vivos

An early version of the film was shown in San Rafael, during the presentation of results from the Participatory Evaluation. Many of the interviewed people were in that meeting; it was easy to know who was on the screen by finding a blushing face followed by a general uproar. At that

moment I knew that the film reflected the voices of the river defense and that it was going to help to keep the history alive.

After this first screening I continued adding elements. Guadalupe Urbina gave me the rights to use the instrumental tracks of her album “Cantos de Amor a la Tierra” Songs of Love for Mother Earth. I also gathered aerial footage, and was able to do more interviews, so I had a version that was almost final and ready to show at the next Ríos Vivos meeting. The preview of the film was the first topic of that meeting, I was honored to have the visit of my supervisor, Deborah Barndt and her partner John Murtaugh at this moment. After some technical difficulties to set things up, with the help of my folks, we began with the screening.



I was not looking at the film I saw a thousand times, I was observing a group of experts (water defenders) watching it for the first time. They kept focused, they laughed, they made comments in complicity, they were immersed in that river, and the stories.

Now I was ready for the comments, I asked them to be sincere, and be critical. The feedback was mostly about details like including a map to orientate the viewer, add the name of the participants, include photos or footage of past events. Also we discussed changing the title from “Desafiando la Hegemonía” (confronting hegemony) to something that is more appealing for the communities, we still haven't figured out the new title.

Jorge: “I have been a part of this fight in the last years, this film summarizes what we have lived. Not everyone is in there, but it reflects how we have organized. This video gives me the sensation of belonging, and makes me feel proud about being able to confront the hegemonic power.”

The filmmaking process has been participatory; during the workshops and interviews I made sure to ask what did the group wanted and what was the purpose of the film. Having these moments of feedback help to verify that the results hold this spirit. Even if there is always a personal creative process going on, and many solo hours editing on the computer, I never felt alone in the process, and I know the film does not belong to me, It belongs to all. This film will exist beyond this research project and that is wonderful. I wanted to give something back to the water defense cause, besides an academic thesis work written in english, that only a few will read.

4. Gathering in San Rafael, sharing the results



One criticism of academic research is that often it does not return to the people involved. That was the previous experience in Ríos Vivos, in which there was a lot of time invested to respond to interviews from researchers, and only a few times the group had access to results, written in academic language difficult to understand and not translated for practical use.

I had a clear desire to offer understandable, useful and empowering results for the groups of defense of the San Rafael river. For this same reason, the research work contains artistic products: the photo collage, the timeline, the water flags and the documentary. These products have the potential to be educational, motivating, inspiring and solidarity building elements. Following this line, I produced a report in Spanish with the results of the Participatory Evaluation workshops for the use of the defense groups of the San Rafael river.

A presentation of results was planned since the beginning, to share the results not only with documents but also to have a conversation and obtain feedback. During the workshops, the group proposed using the presentation of results session, as a way to gather the community and throw a big party as a way to activate the river defense.

Right there the participants planned the event: They identified who should be invited and suggested the best moment to make the presentation (On a Friday, and after 3 pm when most have finished harvesting coffee). They wanted to present the findings themselves, delegating speakers for each topic. They suggested how to install the creative results made during the workshops.

In short, “my” presentation of results for the community was no longer mine, it was “ours”!

The day came, and the photo collage and the timeline were hanging outside of the ranch. The sound equipment, the TV, the coffee and the snacks were ready and people started to arrive early, bringing home-made bread, cookies, tortillas, lemonade. They walked right to the photo collage, and the conversations started to be alive, when the sky turned gray, and a heavy rain began to fall.

In a hurry we picked up the photo collage, and together decided to install it inside the ranch house. With the group effort the new setting was ready in 30 minutes. The heavy rain continued and more people arrived; it was possible to see a line of umbrellas going down to the coffee plantation. The ranch was filled with participants and the rain continued for hours. I said as a joke, “Well, the water didn't want to miss it!” The attendance was so good that we had the presence of uninvited politicians -trying to earn votes-, and a TV reporter.

It was beautiful to see the photo collage in action, how it captured attention, and how it stimulated conversations and laughter. It was a strong storytelling tool, since many of the participants started to share their stories, finding themselves and their friends in the pictures.

With a microphone, the participants presented the timeline, and the most transformative actions. Also the strategies they found, explaining each one. They expressed their vision of the future and how they wish to continue active and organized, in case the hydroelectric project returns in the future. The feedback added more details of how to stay together and face the challenges and future actions, also helped the participants to recognize the importance of the work made during the workshops.

The presentation ended with a screening of a preliminary version of the documentary, which was one of the most remarkable moments of the evening. The group was able to see a story told by themselves; they could recognize their own faces on the screen, see their river and lifestyle, and hear their arguments well framed and clear. The documentary is an empowering tool that will be useful for San Rafael river defenders and a way to document their struggle.

The presentation served my purposes, but also the desire of the participants. It strengthened the bonds of the group in a positive way, with many hugs and smiles. It offered a space for a deeper analysis, and an opportunity to build future alliances, and prepare for future actions.

4. Reflections

4.1 How have the southern communities been able to confront water hegemony?

The following image shows the main river defense strategies that were identified during the PE workshops. I wanted to understand how these efforts are interconnected, so I drew paths between them. Not straight lines of course, because these strategies grew “organically” with the purpose of meeting the short term goal: the cancelation of dams, however the efforts transformed into counter hegemonic ways of power.



Love of water: This struggle raised another perspective of water, for some water was an “inexhaustible resource” taken for granted, and it was there to serve humans. The first lesson was to see the river as a living entity in our communities and our lives, appreciating its presence, learning other ways to relate to it. Love is the fuel to keep this fire alive. Love is power! Love for water is stronger than the love for money that was proclaimed by the hydroelectric *developers*.

Organic ways of knowing. Water defense groups learned by doing, they didn't have academic or technical training to defend their rivers. Skills were developed during the fight, by sharing common experiences, learning from allies and comrades. It was important to recognize the value of the popular forms of knowledge. The river defense formed -in words of Gramsci- Organic Intellectuals, self made specialists in different subjects: communicators, organizers, artists, facilitators or legal advocates. This capacity for knowledge allows the creation of counter ideology, challenging the ideas behind hydroelectric expansion. Knowledge is power!

The ideology that supports hydroelectric expansion is sustained from the international sphere of power. And more and more organic ideology is being produced by environmental movements, collectives, organic intellectuals, artists, and journalists around the world.

Passion. Activists work day and night, they can be available any day of the week if necessary. Some walk 7 km to attend a meeting, others wake up at 2 am to go to a hearing in San José. They cover their own expenses, and maybe to share a sandwich with a fellow river defender. Passion is also to stand up in front of construction machinery, to get arrested, to stand under the sun for hours during a protest. Passion is power ! The *developers* have to pay employees to do the necessary work to build the dams; those employees lack passion for that work, they only work to schedule and do what they're told.

Solidarity networks. As the old saying goes “united we stand!” These networks have the ability to amplify each effort. They can also help to share skills and knowledge. Ríos Vivos de Costa Rica is itself a network, supported by allies in different regions of the country. The solidarity networks are also international; river defenders around the world are organizing and sharing their experiences. Ríos Vivos of Costa Rica participated in the MAR (Movement of communities affected by dams) meeting in Panamá. To unite is a form of power! But within the movement, water defenders also take care of themselves; solidarity and support are a part of the group dynamic.

Visibility: The river defense groups are also able to create their own content, articles, videos, press releases, manifestos, and radio shows. The river defense received attention outside of the southern communities through alliances and solidarity with other communities, organizations, and networks. Some actions had an international impact: San Rafael conflict appears in the Environmental Justice Atlas (EJATLAS 2020). Visibility is power !

According to Foucault and the interpolation of spaces, the vision of the most powerful actor prevails (Foucault 1967). It seems like a synthesis of all the organic ways of power achieved by the river defenders in the South of Costa Rica, that helped them be able not only to fight back, but to defend their rivers and conquer.

“But many communities around the world have fought to save their rivers, and they have lost the battles” said Pablo. It is not only about organizing, fighting and earning power, the outcome is also about conjuncture.

4.2 Challenges of the river defense

Economic crisis: How do we sustain water defense when there are other urgent issues? The habitants of rural communities experience the negative effects of neoliberal agreements. For

example, Costa Rica imports 34% of its rice, 69% of corn, and 73% of beans (PEN 2017). Small and medium farmers cannot compete with international prices. The economic challenges in the rural communities have forced the migration of men to the U.S. and Canada during the 90's, in order to send money home to their families. Many migrants returned home, and don't have formal ways to create income. The river defenders had economic limitations, but this was not an obstacle to stop them from standing up and fighting.

The current global crisis produced by the spread of Covid-19 is a new challenge. Inside Ríos Vivos there is a call to activate solidarity networks, to exchange seeds and food, and to look for alternatives to capitalism.

The ideology still supports hydroelectric expansion: The ideas around *sustainable development, renewable energy, de carbonization* are justifying the construction of dams. These ideas are promoted in high level international meetings and from international financing institutions. It is important that river defense groups assert their perspectives of water having rights, producing counter ideology giving value to organic ways of knowledge, and also using academic and technical language if necessary.

Lack of real participation: Public institutions often talk about being accessible to communities, because now they can have access to the files, and those institutions are open for public or private hearings. But for the river defenders it is more like being able to talk, when nobody is listening. When a community goes to public institutions, presents their testimonies, written papers, legal actions against a “development project,” these actions are mostly ignored and discarded for their lack of technical criteria. River defense groups don't have the financial means to hire professionals. Scientific and technical knowledge serves the dominant classes, and discriminates against other forms of knowledge that are often treated as ignorance. (Kane 2001).

To keep organized after a victory: The actions of southern communities of Costa Rica have canceled -or temporarily suspended- a total of 19 hydroelectric projects. San Rafael is the last

one. Longo Mai is a good example of how to keep organized and active after blocking two hydroelectric projects (Monteverde I and Monteverde II). This community continued training, organizing events, and actively supporting other communities in the same struggle. It is important to focus on positive actions that can keep developing the activist's capacities.

To solve differences: It is important to acknowledge the diversity of the water defense groups, with different ages, religious beliefs, political preferences and world views. It is important to work on the differences thinking in the long term.

The laws remain the same:

The laws 7200 and 7508 promulgated in the 90s opened the electric market to private investors, increasing the requests of new hydroelectric dams around the country. The country is overproducing energy and looking forward to export to the region through the SIEPAC network. This leaves open the possibility for the expansion of public and private hydroelectric projects.

Short term vision: The energy of the groups was mostly focused on reacting to the actions of the dam “developers”, or to the institutional follow up. The fight left no time for analysis, or for planning in the long term or to take initiative in actions. However the strategies developed in the short term organically contributed to the long term objective: *To build the movement to defend rivers in the future*, because they served to build capacities that transformed into alternative forms of power.

This moment (without active hydroelectric project in the south) offers an opportunity to shift to a wider view, and also to embrace long term goals like the ones identified during the Participatory Evaluation workshops and interviews:

- To continue organizing to defend the rivers.

- To organize nationally to change the 7200 and 7508 laws that opened the electric market to private investors, responsible for increasing the number of hydroelectric projects around the country. And achieve a moratorium to block the future construction of unnecessary dams.
- To organize nationally to prohibit the over exploitation of rivers.
It is legal to privatize 90% of a river flow to produce electricity. Many rivers have more concessioned water than their actual flow, this is the case of the Tempisque river basin in the north of Costa Rica, that was drained to support the growth of agribusiness and tourism. (Jimenez 2005). It is necessary to take into account the variable of climate change and the reduction of precipitation, with longer dry seasons. The minimum river flow should consider the particular characteristics of each river and the minimum of water required for the health of species and habitats.

4.3 How can the collective art practices act like counter hegemonic tools?

Based on the experience of this research project, involving the use of different art forms I was able to observe that the richness of the creative participatory process goes beyond the products. For example: The value is not in the photo collage itself, but the transformational conversations it generated, the stories that emerged, how these stories were complemented, obtaining depth. How the faces transformed and expressed emotions, laughter, and sometimes silence. The art making process was a way of learning for me as a student, and also this learning was shared and experienced by the participants.

The art practice increased the awareness, and also helped to build a collective memory of river defense, that goes beyond the participants experience. The results can be extended as pedagogic tools for the community, wherever this photo collage or the documentary goes. These forms of knowledge are organic, or counter hegemonic.

Art making also raised questions, activated the discussion of difficult topics, involved decision making and the art of negotiation, let go of individual desires, focusing our minds on the collective vision. This exercise helps to extend this vision also for the organizational work. The arts practice is a way to straighten these skills in a safe environment, where the differences won't harm, but will teach. Facing differences is a source of power that helps to organize in a better way, to overcome oppression.

4.4 My personal transformation

An elder told me once that you cannot return to the same river twice. The river renews itself as the water keeps flowing.

The MES program has been a transformational experience; this time away from home gave me the opportunity to focus on myself and learn with appetite.

I was able to experience community arts, to participate in a creative collective, to learn to work with video, to sit inside a longhouse, to look at the problems we were facing through the theories of Gramsci, Freire, Shiva, Foucault and Barlow, learning more about water privatization. I learned about planning, research methods, practical frameworks to guide the participatory art practice. I also learned how to do etching and to make flat bread. I painted a mural honoring Berta Cáceres with the help of friends, learning deeper meanings for solidarity and gratitude.

And now I am back home with my hands filled with tools, and maybe unrealistic goals, aiming to do too much in a short time.

As a facilitator, now I guide my work in the pedagogy of Popular Education, using different methodologies and methods. I am aware of power dynamics, and the importance to create a safe

environment for participants. The experience also changed my view as an activist. Before the MES I thought the enemies were the companies building dams, now I know that the enemy is systemic, and to fight against it we need to attack their ideology and “development” discourse. As an artist I learned new forms of expression the most transformational was the ability to tell stories through documentary filmmaking.

I am finishing this report in the middle of the Covid-19 global crisis. This effort reflects my strong faith in humanity and my desire to fulfill the requirements of this degree as a wonderful tool to do my future work but in a more profound way.

Appendix A: Photo Collage











Appendix B: Documentary Script

[Click to open online](#)



Appendix C: Workshops Planning (Learning Looms)

Workshop 1

TIME		OBJECTIVE	METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS	STUFF	WHO
7:00 AM		PREPARATION OF THE SPACE	PREPARATION OF THE SPACE	<p>Assistance lists.</p> <p>Consent form signature</p> <p>Installation of signs, and related art. (Murals)</p> <p>Install projector, screen,</p> <p>Materials (papers, color pencils, markers)</p> <p>Charged batteries</p> <p>Setup film equipment.</p> <p>Sound (speaker)</p> <p>Food for lunch and refreshments</p>	chords, adhesive tape, staples.	Raquel Pablo Jorge
8:30		Consent form signature	Revision of the consent form, and signature by participants.	The researcher will introduce the project and will read the consent form, explain and answer questions. The participants are able to choose to sign the form if they wish to participate in the research..	20 Printed copies of the consent form. Pens.	Raquel. Jorge
9	9:20	Presentation of participants	Stand up, sit down, energize. Name presentation of participants. Name only. quickly.	description: The facilitator will start making easy standard statements, if participants agree they must stand up. This is a way to receive some key introductory information to know more about the participants background and expectations on the workshops.	Papers with the the written questions The group must be sitting down in a circle.	Pablo will ask the questions. Raquel will be taking the pictures.
9:20	9:30	Coffee break. The group will decide the best time for the coffee	COFFEE	Coffee and cookies	In the meantime the materials for the next	Nelsi. Ariel

		break. It might move			activity will be prepared.	
9:30	10:00	Let's describe the monster.	Description of the problem. What are we fighting against?	A drawing of a monster will be placed in the meeting room. Participants will write their description of the monster on paper. In this circle we will share these descriptions. The facilitator will write this ideas down on the monster drawing	Monster drawing on a big paper. .CAMERA. FILM AUDIO RECORDING	ARIEL. Raquel will be filming
10:00	10:20	How did we feel about the problem?	First emotions related with the problem	the participants will mark on a circle the emotions they experienced	CAMERA. FILM AUDIO RECORDING	Oscar Beita, Raquel Bolaños
10:20	12:30 PM	Historical construction of the problem	Compilation of events on the river defense	The participants will divide in groups, Each group will collect key moments of the river defense with an approximate date. For each a paper will be filled with the information: Event, date, who The groups will glue the key moments into a timeline (made of cardboard) *Each group will describe their events. New events might be added. *A previously made national timeline will be added, same as an international one. *Group Analysis of the results.	Timeline made of cardboard, pieces of paper, markers	Raquel
12:00	1:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK				Nelsi
1:00	1:15	Energizer				Pablo
1:15	1:30	,	How are we feeling about the workshop? What should be improved? Are we energized?			Raquel

1:30	2:30	Identification of the key elements to tell the story	Participants will identify key elements to tell the story, this elements can be latter used on the Mural	Participants will make drawings of the key elements to tell the story of San Rafael River defense. 4 pieces of paper per participant (they can ask for more) one option for the ones that do not feel comfortable with drawing is to write the name of the key elements. * Participants will explain their drawings and the key elements they identified, These elements will be placed in two groups, the problem and the solution.		
2:30 PM	3:30	Representation of the problem and its key elements	Theatre of the Oppressed	Representation of the problem, and how we confronted the problem. Possibly add some new elements to the previous list.		
3:30	4:00 PM	First Brainstorm for the mural				
4	5	Cleanup the space		Leave no trace,		
next day	next day	Transcription of the workshop				

Workshop 2

TIME	OBJECTIVE	METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS	STUFF	WHO
7:00 AM	PREPARATION OF THE SPACE	PREPARATION OF THE SPACE	<p>Assistance lists.</p> <p>Consent form signature</p> <p>Installation of signs, and related art. (Murals)</p> <p>Materials (papers, color pencils, markers...)</p> <p>Charged batteries</p> <p>Setup film equipment.</p>	chords, adhesive tape, staples.	Raquel

				Sound (speaker) Food for lunch and refreshments		
8:30		Consent form signature, of the missing participants	Revision of the consent form, and signature by participants.	Introduction to consent form	20 Printed copies of the consent form. Pens.	Raquel. Jorge
9	9:20 AM	Energizer with a very short presentation of participants	.		.	
9:20	10:30	Analysis of the timeline: What can you notice, any comments or stories? -positive momentos, hard moments. What strategies can we notice on this timeline? What was successful, what can be improved?	Analysis of the timeline, memories, streights, weaknesses, identification of strategies.	Invite the group to stand on the timeline, and share memories, -or write them- paste pictures if they share them on the whatsapp group (and I can print them). Then invite people to talk about these memories, Identify the strengths of the group, and also the weakness and conflict. identify the ways used to deal with the conflict. A second moment to identify the strategies used for the river defense.	Timeline. pictures, glue, sticky notes, markers, . CAMERA. FILM AUDIO RECORDING	Raquel
10:30	10:45	Coffee break.	COFFEE	Coffee and cookies	In the meantime the materials for the next activity will be prepared.	Lillian, Raquel
10:45	12:00	Spider Web *Also qualitative	Measure strategies for the river defense	SPIDER WEBFind volunteers to build a spider web with the strategies at the edges of the lines... and then evaluate the strength of each strategie with a scale from 1 - 10 .	cardboard, markers, chord, camera	Raquel

12:00	1:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK			RICE AND CHICKEN	Nelsi
1:00	1:15	Micro evaluation	How are we doing?	What should we improve?		
1:15	2:00	Identification of the actors-allies of the conflict	Brainstorm	Write the actors in signs. Keep more signs to add if they emerge	marker, cardboard	Pablo
2:00	3:00	Theatre of the oppressed	Visual representation of the conflict	Representation of the problem, and how we confronted the problem. Possibly add some new elements new signs will be created	Signs, video camera, photography camera, audio recording	Raquel
3:00	3:20 PM	Second brainstorm of the mural.				
4	5	Cleanup of the space		Leave no trace		
next day	next day	Transcription of the workshop				

Appendix D: Collective Timeline

Acciones	Fecha	Clasificación	Alcance	Quién
Inicia trámite de Viabilidad Ambiental en la SETENA	12/17/2012	tramitología	nacional	H.Solís
Primeras Reuniones, inicia oposición al proyecto	1/1/2013	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Otorgamiento de Permisos de uso de suelo al proyecto	2/1/2013	Tramitología	cantonal	Municipalida d PZ
Encuentro de comunidades afectadas por represas, Longo Mai	3/1/2013	Reuniones	regional	Ríos Vivos
Reuniones con el padre gerardo en Casa Sinaí	4/1/2013	Reuniones	cantonal	Iglesia católica
Manifestaciones en el Concejo Municipal	7/1/2013	Confrontación	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Reunión en Barrio los Ángeles con la Pastoral Social	1/1/2014	Reuniones	local	Iglesia católica
Solicitud de concesión para el aprovechamiento de aguas	2/2/2014	Tramitología	nacional	H.Solís
Oposición a la solicitud de concesión de aguas	3/3/2014	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Tarde de Ríos en Trincheras	3/22/2014	Información	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Convocatoria Asambleas Asociaciones de desarrollo	6/6/2014	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Manifestaciones en el Concejo Municipal	7/7/2014	Confrontación	regional	Ríos Vivos
Solicitud concesión servicios público, venta de electricidad	2/2/2015	Tramitología	nacional	H.Solís
H. Solís es seleccionado por el Ice. Elegibilidad	3/3/2015	Acciones de la Empresa	nacional	ICE
Audiencia en el Concejo Municipal	4/4/2015	Confrontación	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Reunión de Ríos Vivos en la Finca el Guanacaste	5/31/2015	Reuniones	regional	Ríos Vivos
Reunión informativa con vecinos de La Unión	7/2/2015	Información	local	Ríos Vivos
Encuentro de Comunidades en Turrialba	8/28/2015	Reuniones	nacional	FECON
UCR ofrece ayuda en una reunión en San Rafael	8/23/2015	Reuniones	local	Kioscos UCR

Se saca copia del expediente en la SETENA	8/12/2015	Información	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Se inician reuniones en Zapotal	8/8/2015	Información	local	Ríos Vivos
Reuniones con vecinos de San Rafael	8/9/2015	Información	local	Ríos Vivos
Reunión Ríos vivos en Longo Mai. Regaño Yendy	8/5/2015	Reuniones	regional	Ríos Vivos
Reunión con vecinos de Zapotal	9/7/2015	Reuniones	local	Ríos Vivos
Caminata en el Río San Rafael	9/21/2015	Confrontación	cantonal	Kioscos UCR
Conversatorio en la UNA	9/28/2015	Información	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Reunión con vecinos de La Guaria	9/30/2015	Información	local	Ríos Vivos
Sobrenombre a los defensores del río: "Chucuyos como café"	9/30/2015	Confrontación	local	Promotores del proyecto
Reunión con Monseñor Romero, San Rafael	9/22/2015	Reuniones	local	Iglesia católica
Diálogos energéticos para el Plan Nacional de Energía	9/9/2015	Confrontación	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Reunión para dar informes a la ADI de la Guaria	9/30/2015	Información	local	Comision San Rafael
Reunión para preparar caminata en San Rafael-La guaria. 190 personas	9/20/2015	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Reunión con la ADI de San Rafael y el pueblo	10/17/2015	Información	local	Comision San Rafael
Reunión campaña electoral Vera Corales (candidata a diputada)	9/21/2015	Reuniones	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
ADI realiza carta en oposición del PH San Rafael	9/7/2015	Tramitología	local	Comision San Rafael
Manifestación concejo Municipal, vecinos de San Pedro	12/1/2015	Confrontación	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Desestimación de los documentos presentados	1/1/2016	Tramitología	nacional	Dirección de aguas
Audiencia Pública de la Aresep en San pedro	2/2/2016	Confrontación	cantonal	ARESEP
Más de 600 vecinos en la audiencia pública de la Aresep	2/2/2016	Confrontación	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
H.Solís obtiene la concesión de aguas	3/3/2015	Acciones de la Empresa	nacional	Dirección de aguas
Bingo Bailable en el Rancho de San Rafael	3/20/2016	Reuniones	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Solicitud del archivo del Ph San Rafael en la Aresep	3/28/2016	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos

Taller de Fotoperiodismo Voces Nuestras	4/7/2016	Capacitaciones	regional	Voces Nuestras
Comisión Nacional de Emergencias apoya a H.Solís, en la Municipalidad	5/25/2016	Acciones de la Empresa	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Reunión con la Comisión Plenaria, SETENA en San José	7/7/2016	Reuniones	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Manifestación en la Municipalidad. Concejo Municipal	7/5/2016	Confrontación	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Carta abierta al Alcalde de Pérez Zeledón	7/8/2016	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Moratoria construcción de Hidroeléctricas	7/12/2016	Tramitología	regional	Municipalida d PZ
Solicitud destitución del presidente de la ADI San pedro	8/8/2016	Confrontación	local	Comision San Rafael
Defensoría de los Habitantes solicita documentos de la falla	8/3/2016	Tramitología	nacional	Defensoría de los habitantes
Formación de un nuevo comité. Comisión defensora del san rafael	8/3/2016	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Entrega de oposiciones al expediente administrativo en el ICE	8/8/2016	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Solicitud de Audiencia Pública en la SETENA	9/2/2016	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
sesión con la Comisión Plenaria de SETENA sobre PH San Rafael.	9/7/2016	Reuniones	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Deslizamiento en Zapotal, tubería rota	9/14/2016	Desastre natural	local	Comision San Rafael
Comisión entrega documentos al Padre Rafael	9/22/2016	Información	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Reunión de la comisión. Informaciones setena, Aturena es neutral	10/2/2016	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Se envían documentos a la defensoría de los Habitantes	10/2/2016	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Reunión con Aturena en San Gerónimo	10/11/2016	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Reunión informativa en Fátima con personas defensoras del río	10/17/2016	Información	local	Ríos Vivos
Comunicado de prensa. Setena acelera trámite del PH San Rafael	11/2/2016	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
I Edición del Chapuzón	11/4/2016	Información	internac	Ríos Vivos

Reunión de coordinación para el cierre del Puente de Santa Ana	11/5/2016	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Reunión de coordinación para el cierre del Puente de Santa Ana	11/8/2016	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Participación en el programa el Campo y Más	11/8/2016	Información	regional	Comision San Rafael
Agresión a don Rafa (Pedrada)	11/18/2016	Confrontación	local	Promotores del proyecto
Reunión en el corredor Biológico en Longo Mai. recolección firmas	12/1/2016	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Artículo Diario Extra: Por qué oponerse al PH San Rafael?	12/10/2016	Información	nacional	Prensa
Reunión con el Obispo y Padre Rafael	12/10/2016	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Taller Voces Nuestras, Preparación del Chapuzón	10/15/2016	Capacitaciones	cantonal	Voces Nuestras
Manifestación en el complejo Cultural	12/12/2016	Confrontación	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Audiencia Aresep en San Rafael. Néstor y Raúl no hablan.	12/14/2016	Confrontación	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Cuarta apelación en la dirección de Aguas	12/16/2016	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Caminata, bloqueo del puente La Unión	10/12/2016	Confrontación	nacional	Comision San Rafael
Campaña política, reunión con candidatos a regidores	12/7/2016	Reuniones	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Aresep, 2017, rechazó la solicitud de concesión de servicio público		Tramitología	nacional	ARESEP
Comunidad pagó un abogado para hacer gestiones en la municipalidad	1/26/2017	Tramitología	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Participación Curso gestión socio ambiental para desarrolladores	1/30/2017	Información	internac	Ríos Vivos
Gira a proyectos hidroeléctricos modelos	2/3/2017	Acciones de la Empresa	cantonal	H.Solís
Empresa Apeló rechazo del permiso de la Aresep		Acciones de la Empresa	nacional	H.Solís
Jornada de comunidades en defensa del río San Rafael	3/18/2017	Reuniones	nacional	Organizacion es aliadas
Reunión con la diputada xinia espinoza	4/25/2017	Reuniones	cantonal	Comision San Rafael

Comisión entrega nota al presidente de la república	5/15/2017	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Taller de incidencia política Voces Nuestras	5/30/2017	Capacitaciones	cantonal	Voces Nuestras
Enfrentamiento con H Solís en el río. 4 miembros de la comisión	2017	Confrontación	local	Comision San Rafael
Encuentro interuniversitario Rancho de Hernán y Lillian	10/10/2017	Información	nacional	Comision San Rafael
Inicia campaña de Rótulos	6/6/2017	Información	local	Ríos Vivos
Niños graban campaña en la escuela la Guaria	6/7/2017	Información	nacional	Voces Nuestras
Taller de incidencia política Voces Nuestras	6/11/2017	Capacitaciones	cantonal	Voces Nuestras
Se rompe tubería del acueducto a causa del deslizamiento en zapotal	7/16/2017	Desastre natural	local	deslizamient o zapotal
Miembros de la comisión documentan el nuevo deslizamiento	7/16/2017	Información	local	Comision San Rafael
Se publica comunicado de prensa sobre la ruptura de la tubería	7/17/2017	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Artículo diario extra, PHs contra natura en el sur de CR	7/16/2017	Información	nacional	Prensa
Encuentro mesoamericano Voces Nuestras	8/6/2017	Reuniones	internac	Voces Nuestras
Comunicado de prensa, vecinos de San Pedro Viajarán a SJ	9/6/2017	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Foro, Universidad Nacional. La energía hidroeléctrica es limpia?	9/8/2017	Información	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Deslizamiento en Zapotal	9/8/2017	Desastre natural	local	deslizamient o zapotal
Vecinos visitan el deslizamiento y documentan la situación	9/8/2017	Información	local	Comision San Rafael
Comunicado de prensa, deslizamiento en San Rafael	9/9/2017	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Grabación del programa El Campo y Más en el deslizamiento	9/13/2017	Información	nacional	Prensa
Expedición de Rafting Septiembre extremo. Redes con guías	9/18/2017	Reuniones	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Publicación del reportaje el Campo y Más sobre la defensa del río	9/30/2017	Información	nacional	Prensa

Tormenta tropical Nate	10/7/2017	Desastre natural	internac	
Junta directiva de Aresep rechazó concesión del PH San Rafael	8/10/2017	Tramitología	nacional	ARESEP
Rechazo de solicitud de nulidad de la concesión de agua del PH san rafael	10/12/2017	Tramitología	nacional	ARESEP
Se publica el video de mujeres defensoras del río san rafael	11/12/2017	Información	nacional	Voces Nuestras
Maquinaria de HSolís provoca enfrentamiento con la comunidad	10/19/2017	Confrontación	local	Comision San Rafael
Comunicado de prensa, Enfrentamiento de vecinos y maquinaria	10/20/2017	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Se suspende marcha pacífica en San Rafael por el huracán	10/15/2017	Reuniones	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Vecinos se movilizan apoyando a Luis Valverde. medidas cautelares	10/25/2017	Confrontación	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Programa en Radio Cultura, Miguel Marín	10/25/2017	Información	cantonal	Prensa
Solicitud de nulidad para el PH San Rafael	10/26/2017	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Comunicado de prensa: Aresep otorga concesión a H.Solís	10/31/2017	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Taller de comunicación voces nuestras, montaña verde	11/3/2017	Capacitaciones	cantonal	Voces Nuestras
Encuentro bajo la ceiba	11/10/2017	Reuniones	nacional	Organizacion es aliadas
Video visita a San José, alianzas estratégicas	11/13/2017	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Conferencia de prensa	11/10/2017	Información	nacional	Voces Nuestras
Artículo de prensa: Comunidad se opone a planta hidroeléctrica	11/28/2017	Información	nacional	Prensa
Empresa gana el recurso legal y obtiene el permiso de Aresep	1/1/2018	Acciones de la Empresa	nacional	ARESEP
Archivada la ley de aguas	1/25/2018	Información	nacional	asamblea legislativa
Ice firma contrato con H.Solís	2/1/2018	Acciones de la Empresa	nacional	ICE
Transmisión en vivo programa La cabuya, parque de san Isidro	2/25/2018	Información	nacional	Voces Nuestras
Comisión San Rafael participa en la Feria del Agua en Longo Mai	5/19/2018	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael

Visita de los estudiantes de la U de Arizona a San Rafael	5/28/2018	Reuniones	internac	Comision San Rafael
PH Diquís no tiene declaratoria de interés nacional	5/14/2018	Tramitología	nacional	Minae
Festival Ambiental San Rafael	5/6/2018	Reuniones	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Festival ambiental San Rafael	5/5/2018	Reuniones	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Encuentro Bajo La Ceiba	5/19/2018	Reuniones	nacional	FECON
Video en Solidaridad con Berta Cáceres	3/20/2018	Información	interna	Ríos Vivos
Setena rechaza recursos presentados por la comunidad	3/3/2018	Tramitología	nacional	Setena
Reforestación en la cuenca del río San Rafael	6/5/2018	Capacitaciones	local	Comision San Rafael
Acogida de recursos de amparo por los permisos municipales de la hidroeléctrica	6/8/2018	Tramitología	nacional	Sala Constitucion
Reunión con estudiantes de la Universidad de York	6/7/2018	Información	internac	Comision San Rafael
Solicitud de nulidad en la SETENA para la viabilidad ambiental del proyecto	2/5/2018	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Unión zonal apoya la lucha por la defensa del río san rafael	7/28/2018	Tramitología	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Reunión con comunidades en Punta Morales	8/3/2018	Reuniones	nacional	Organizacion es aliadas
Participación diálogos de gobernanza del agua MINAE	9/9/2018	Reuniones	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Foro comunitario Mala Gobernanza del agua	9/9/2018	Confrontación	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Artículo Diario Extra: Comunidades cuestionan PHs	10/24/2018	Información	nacional	Prensa
Participación Semana U, Pérez Zeledón	10/10/2018	Información	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Artículo Semanario Universidad: Costa Rica y su fiebre Hidroeléctrica	10/9/2018	Información	nacional	Prensa
Participación en el programa Era Verde, Chume y Jury	10/12/2018	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
ICE cancela el PH Diquis	11/2/2018	Tramitología	nacional	ICE
Fotomontaje, ríos secos	11/21/2018	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Grabado de nutria	11/18/2018	Información	internac	Ríos Vivos
Radio Actual con Osvaldo Durán	11/17/2018	Información	nacional	FECON

Lucha San Rafael aparece en el atlas de conflictos ambientales	12/15/2018	Información	internac	Ríos Vivos
H Solís solicitó declaratoria de conveniencia nacional	1/9/2019	Acciones de la Empresa	nacional	H.Solís
Lanzamiento de petición en línea contra la conveniencia nac	1/17/2019	Tramitología	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Se descubre el que ICE otorgó contrato a H.Solís	1/25/2019	Tramitología	nacional	Frente Amplio
Comunicado de prensa, contrato del ICE para H. solís	1/28/2019	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Imágenes, campaña irregularidades San Rafael	1/30/2019	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Oposición conveniencia. 12 organizaciones entregan nota al ministro de ambiente.	3/2/2019	Tramitología	nacional	Organizaciones aliadas
Compra de electricidad de generadores privados es más caro	3/7/2019	Información	nacional	Prensa
Programa de radio de Tony Mendez	3/6/2019	Información	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Día de acción contra las represas, video	3/14/2019	Información	internac	Ríos Vivos
Conferencia de Prensa, Ultraipz	15 marzo 2019	Información	regional	Ríos Vivos
Encuentro de comunidades en San Rafael. Turrialba	3/17/2019	Reuniones	nacional	FECON
Programa Era Verde. PH San Rafael contra comunidades	3/29/2019	Información	nacional	Prensa
Foro en la UNA. Recurso Hídrico y tensiones	3/29/2019	Información	cantonal	
Comunicado de prensa. situación del río san Rafael	3/22/2019	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Artículo Osvaldo Durán. Seguir hasta liquidarlo	4/7/2019	Información	nacional	FECON
Artículo de Francesc Rodríguez sobre Caudales Ambientales	4/17/2019	Información	internac	Ríos Vivos
Marcha en San José, Ríos Vivos y Turrialba	4/25/2019	Confrontación	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Manifestación en parque de san isidro	5/1/2019	Confrontación	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Banderitas del agua, en el festival expo cobas	5/18/2019	Información	local	Ríos Vivos

Ministra de ambiente declara que la electricidad privada encarece la factura eléctrica	5/10/2019	Información	nacional	Prensa
Artículo. Generación privada afectaría comunidades en Turrialba y Pérez	5/4/2019	Información	nacional	Prensa
Se publicó la foto de un Oso hormiguero a la orilla del río san rafael	6/4/2019	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Visita de los estudiantes de la Universidad de York	6/15/2019	Información	internac	Comision San Rafael
Taller de mujeres, voces nuestras	2 de julio 2019	Capacitaciones	local	Voces Nuestras
Luis Monge en el programa El Campo y más	6 de julio 2019	Información	nacional	Prensa
Ministro rechazó la conveniencia nacional para el PH San Rafael	15 de julio 2019	Tramitología	nacional	Minae
Comunicado de prensa. rechazo de la conveniencia nacional	15 de julio 2019	Información	nacional	Ríos Vivos
Celebración en San Rafael y visita del ministro de ambiente	10 de agosto 2019	Reuniones	cantonal	Comision San Rafael
Reforestación en el Río San Rafael	5 septiembre 2019	Reuniones	local	Comision San Rafael
Sistematización, historia de la lucha de la defensa del ríos san rafael	17 noviembre 2019	Información	regional	Ríos Vivos
Solicitud de anulación de permisos en todas las instancias	15 noviembre 2019	Tramitología	cantonal	Ríos Vivos
Vencimiento de la viabilidad ambiental para el PH San Rafael	10 enero 2020	Tramitología	nacional	Setena
Reunión de Ríos Vivos en Longo Mai	15 febrero 2020	Reuniones	regional	Ríos Vivos
Asesinato de Jerhy Rivera Rivera	24 de febrero, 2020		internac	

Appendix F: Informe Evaluación Participativa en la Defensa del Río San Rafael (Participatory Evaluation Report in San Rafael river defense)

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